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## *CONCERNING MIRACLE*

THE LATE

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Educated but uncritical thought finds the notion of miracle increasingly burdensome. Many reject it outright and others would gladly be rid of it. The current conception with such persons may be fairly described as follows: There is an order of nature from which it is hard, if not impossible, to show a departure. There may be apparent departures from the accustomed order, but they are always expressions of a deeper order and hence are natural. For instance, the freezing of water by the application of heat seems like a violation of the familiar laws of physics, but it is really an illustration. The science of today makes us familiar with many facts, which would once have been thought miraculous, but which we now see to be outcomes of law. Comets and eclipses were cases of this kind in the middle ages, and epidemics also were similarly regarded; but all of these things have been brought under the reign of law. The aeroplane and wireless telegraphy, and even the trolley car, would have been signs and wonders beyond ordinary thaumaturgy three hundred years ago, but they are not miraculous. The facts of witchcraft, faith healing, cures at shrines, were long denied because they seemed to affirm spiritual agencies of some sort; now we admit many of the alleged facts, but deny their supernatural character by including them under the head of hypnotism, suggestion, influence of mind on body, and so on. Considerations of this kind are making us increasingly hospitable to strange facts which once would have been thought miraculous, and increasingly indisposed

to admit their miraculous character. Thus the realm of nature and the realm of mystery are both extending, but the sphere of miracle seems to be approaching the vanishing-point.

The facts, as thus stated, appear decisive, but they are really vague and ambiguous. The true conclusion is that although the realm of law is growing, miracle is not excluded. The antithesis to law is not miracle, but disorder and chaos. Miracle in any religious sense implies a system from which a departure is made. It presupposes an established order and then assumes that God for some sufficient reason departs from it in such a way as to reveal his presence and purpose. The superficiality involved in opposing the reign of law to the fact of miracle is nothing less than pathetic in its irrelevancy, for the religious believer in miracles affirms the reign of law as much as anyone, but he also believes in a Creator and Administrator of this law and holds that this Creator may for good reasons depart from it.

Again, when we speak of the fixed order of nature we have a phrase of very uncertain meaning. It may mean the order of observable law on which we practically depend, and it may mean a system of absolute and universal determinism which denies all freedom and holds that all events in the universe, mental and physical alike, are the necessary resultants of their temporal antecedents according to inexorable laws. These two meanings are very different. The former is a harmless statement of what all admit, and the latter is a baseless and self-destructive dogmatism. It is no uncommon thing to find persons passing unwittingly from the former to the latter meaning under some such ambiguous phrase as "scientific method" or "the postulates of science." These phrases, as thus used, are arrant question-beggars, and usually cover an abyss of ignorance by a showy but baseless pretence of knowledge.

These considerations show that the question of miracle goes deeper than is commonly supposed and that it cannot be settled without recourse to philosophy. The debate can really proceed only on a theistic basis. Atheism could not deny the possibility of extraordinary happenings, but these would not be miracles but exceptions to law. They would be simply failing cases or faults in the accustomed order, and not indications of a supernatural

agency. They would be merely opaque facts of which we could make nothing. All systems of necessity, also, would be in the same condition. They would admit all manner of departures from the order, for we have no means of proving the observed order to be all-embracing and eternal. For all we can say, any number of departures from order might occur, but they would not be miraculous, they would be simply manifestations of the kaleidoscopic implications of the underlying power. Both of these views would logically reduce us to the baldest empiricism without the slightest warrant for expectation for the future or for surprise at whatever it might bring. It is only as we admit the existence of God that miracle in any intelligible sense is given, or that it has any practical importance. How, then, does the matter look from a theistic standpoint?

Historically the subject has been somewhat complicated by the use of miracles for the construction of technical evidences of Christianity, and the matter has been further confused by the deistic philosophy which has so largely ruled our thought. The actual difficulties mainly root in this deistic conception. On that view God made the world and set it going under the control of general laws, and since then he has rested from his cosmic labors, having no administrative function whatever in connection with the world of things. All events, then, that happen in this on-going are the products of these laws and as such are natural. A miracle on the other hand would be something that could not be accounted for by the laws of nature, but would be an interjection or interference from without by God. On this view God made a system which for the present runs itself, and anything that nature does is subtracted from his control. Thus we seem to have two agencies in the outer world, God and nature. Nature is the proximate agency, and God is needed, if at all, only to set nature going. Meanwhile nature runs its own mechanical course, producing a great variety of effects for which nature alone is responsible; and we must not think of referring anything to God until all the resources of nature are exhausted. So long as any natural cause can be found, or rather, until it can be shown that no natural cause can be found, we must not have recourse to a supernatural one. But as nature is ever growing

more vast and mysterious, it becomes practically impossible, it would seem, to demonstrate any event to be supernatural. Thus, beginning with belief in God, we tend by our absentee conception of him and by our thought of a self-running nature to make God less and less necessary, and even to return to atheism. In all this the underlying thought is that all events are natural and therefore undivine; that is, they represent no divine purpose or meaning. Only that is divine which is anomalous and unaccountable, and as the realm of the anomalous is growing less the realm of God is correspondingly decreasing. This inversion of all good sense is one of the standing features of the debate.

Before proceeding to the decisive criticism of this view, we may point out that so long as it believes in God at all it is inconsistent with its own principles. For if there was a divine purpose at the beginning, it must have embraced all its implications, so as to leave no place for mere by-products and unintended happenings in the system. Such a fancy would be a crude extension to God of our relation to our machines which are only to a small extent in our own power. If, then, we regard nature as an impersonal mechanism, we must say that the creative act implied all its products forevermore, even to the minutest details and most remote effects. For mechanism can only unfold its implications. There is a fancy in uncritical thought that mechanism can do a great many unintended things which were not originally implied in it. This is the fallacy of the class term. Our thinking is largely symbolic and short-hand, and thus we produce various simple conceptions which apply to a great many things without implying any of them. In the same way, when we think of the cosmic mechanism, we form such abstractions as matter and force, in which none of the details or particulars of the system are mentioned, and then we think that these two abstractions are capable by themselves of producing and maintaining the cosmic order. But as soon as we come to think concretely and exhaustively, we see that mechanism can make no new departures or produce factors and events not originally provided for. The world is not merely a system of general laws; it is also a great multitude of individuals and detailed happenings. Indeed this multitude is the concrete fact and the general laws are only our

abstractions from concrete things and happenings. They apply to the things, but they do not imply them. Now the creative act in such a system implies the whole set of consequences,—not merely general laws, but the concrete multitude of things to the remotest detail. If anything had not been provided for in the creative act, the thing would not have occurred, and, conversely, if the thing was to occur, it must have been provided for in the creative act. We must hold, then, that God in creating intended all that creation implies, for we can hardly suppose that he did not know what he was doing or that he could not help himself. Hence, if we allow nature to be at present a real mechanical system, we have no occasion to be religiously disturbed thereat as if it were a rival to God, for such nature could never do anything but what it was determined by its constitution to do; and there is nothing to forbid the thought that it may have been determined to work in human service and for the realization of the divine purpose. In that case mechanism would only be the instrument by which the purpose is realized.

At one time the view which made God and nature different and somewhat antithetical powers seemed fairly clear and, moreover, difficult to escape. In fact, however, progress in philosophical thinking of recent years has greatly modified the whole matter so as to give the discussion a very different form. The doctrine of the Divine Immanence, which is now so generally held in the higher speculative circles, is fast displacing the conception of nature as anything substantial and self-administering, and reducing it to the phenomenal form of the divine causality. Nature is nothing in itself and of course it does nothing of itself. Things and events hang together or come about in certain ways, but the ground and cause of them all must be found beyond them. Nature expresses an order of change, but never reveals its causal source. In this respect it is something like a series of sounds, as in a piece of music. The relation of the various notes might be described in their coexistences and sequences, but there would be no causality in them, and no passing up and down the tone series would ever reveal the causality. Causality is apart from the series in the composer and performer. In the same way the study of the natural order has led to a distinction between the space

and time world which can be presented to the senses, and the power world which is forever out of sight, the invisible ground of the spatial and temporal order. The space and time world, then, is regarded as an effect like the series of tones, and also like that series it has its causality outside itself. In that case nature as a system of spatial and temporal phenomena is but the continuous product of the invisible power or energy on which it forever depends. And as we regard that power as divine, we have to say that the entire system abuts upon and continually proceeds from the divine will. God is no absentee, but is rather the changeless power by which all things exist and by which all things stand or go. This is the view which is fast becoming universal in the philosophical world. Deism is dead; we must have a living and immanent God or none.

With this result, nature loses its substantial character and becomes simply God's continuous deed. It is throughout supernatural in its causality. All cosmic causality is divine. The most familiar event proceeds as directly from the divine will as the most extraordinary and miraculous. But the supernatural cause is orderly, that is natural, in its manifestations; and thus we come to the conception of a supernatural natural,—that is, a natural which forever roots in the supernatural; and a natural supernatural,—that is, a supernatural that proceeds in orderly and uniform ways. But whatever happens, be it the maintenance of the familiar routine or miraculous departure from it, happens not of itself or because of some inexorable and self-executing law or system, but because in the divine purpose and wisdom that is the thing demanded; and in all events alike God is equally present and equally near.

This result can be securely maintained on the basis of philosophic reflection. Nature is no longer a rival of God, but simply the form under which the divine will proceeds in its cosmic outgo. With this result we have almost all that religion really aims at in its insistence upon miracle. Religion seeks after God. It longs to find the Father and to know that he is near. But proceeding on naturalistic and deistic assumptions, we build up the phantom of nature which petrifies man's higher life, and then we look anxiously for breaks in the natural order and pin our faith on

miracles, mainly physical, as the sole indication of God's presence, if not of God's existence. But with the conception of a supernatural natural we can breathe freely even in the face of the natural order, and are much less concerned about miracle in the sense of a departure from natural law. The distinction between the natural and the supernatural in that case would not lie in the causality, but in the phenomenal relations. The causality would be equally supernatural in both. The natural and miraculous would be equally products of the divine will, but in the case of miracle there would be a departure from the familiar order so as to indicate to believers a divine presence and meaning. Miracles in themselves would be no more divinely wrought than any routine event. The only place or function we could find for them would be as signs of a divine power and purpose which men immersed in sense could not find in the ordinary course of the natural. They might be condescensions to human weakness, but they would root no more intimately in the divine will and purpose than the most familiar events. If this conception of the supernatural be allowed, the question of miracle loses much of its importance religiously and otherwise, for, as we have said, religion has interest only in finding God and has insisted so strenuously upon miracle because its deistic philosophy left no other way to find him.

In the traditional debates on this subject very little attention has been given to defining miracle so as clearly to indicate its character. There has been a strong tendency on the part of believers so to define miracle as to limit it to the original signs necessary for the establishment of the Christian faith, and Protestant theologians have largely taken this view. In this way they thought to reject the miracles of the Catholic church and also to secure material for the construction of evidences of Christianity. Frequently their definitions were made strictly with this aim. Thus a distinguished theologian of the last generation defined a miracle as

- (1) An event occurring in the physical world capable of being discerned and discriminated by the bodily senses of human witnesses;
- (2) Of such a character that it can be rationally referred to no other cause than the immediate volition of God;



(3) Accompanying a religious teacher and designed to authenticate his divine commission and the truth of his message.

Accordingly, writers of this class were not willing to allow that answers to prayer or special providences and the like were to be viewed as miraculous. Scientific writers, on the other hand, defined miracles as any departure from the order of nature such that the continuity of nature is in some degree broken, no matter how large or small the fracture may be. Hence they held stoutly to continuity and regarded any consideration of the size of the miracle as a kind of logical shilly-shallying which could not be too strongly condemned. Every event must be looked upon as the result of its antecedents, and special providences and answers to prayers involved miracle just as much as the most striking event. Here the assumption of an absolute determinism clearly appears.

Professor Tyndall, who was one of the ablest supporters of the naturalistic position, had considerable argument with Canon Mozley on this point. In his paper on "Prayer and Natural Law" he says that the notion of natural law is displacing the belief in volition. "One by one natural phenomena have been associated with their proximate causes and the idea of direct personal volition mixing itself with the economy of nature is retreating more and more." As to any effect of prayer on physical conditions, he rejects it. He tells of a young priest who came up every year to a town in Switzerland to "bless the mountains." "Year by year the Highest was entreated by official intercessions to make such meteorological arrangements as would insure food and shelter for the flocks and herds of the Valaisians." But Professor Tyndall regarded this as altogether unpermissible. "The Italian wind gliding over the crest of the Matterhorn is as firmly ruled as the earth in its orbital revolution around the sun, and the fall of its vapor into clouds is exactly as much a matter of necessity as the return of the seasons. The dissipation, therefore, of the slightest mist by the special volition of the Eternal would be as much a miracle as the rolling of the Rhone over the Grimsel precipices and down Haslithal to Brienz." (*Fragments of Science*, p. 39.) The same thought was continued by Professor Tyndall in the next paper on "Miracles and Special Provi-

dences," in which he argues that Mozley's distinction of the two is untenable. Here special providences are declared to be miracles, in that they imply a result which was not due to their natural antecedents, and, as miracles are not to be allowed, special providences, answers to prayer, etc., at least in the physical realm, must go with them. He adds: "She [science] does assert for example that without a disturbance of natural law quite as serious as the stoppage of an eclipse or the rolling of the St. Lawrence up the Falls of Niagara no act of humiliation, individual or national, could call one shower from heaven or deflect toward us a single beam of the sun" (p. 39).

Here Professor Tyndall is strenuous for a continuity of natural law, and tacitly assumes that the antecedent physical conditions fully determine the consequent physical effect. However, this view is by no means self-evident when we recall the distinction already made between the space and time world and the world of power. In the space and time world we can now and then trace an antecedent into its consequent, but only when it is a case of the composition of motions as in kinematics. If a body is moving and is not interfered with, provided we know its rate and direction, we can tell where it will be at any later time, and if two or more bodies are moving together, it would be possible to compound their motions into a resultant motion. But this is possible only to a very slight extent in dealing with the actual changes of the physical world, as those changes are not due to antecedent movements alone, but to those movements plus some determination from the world of power. For example, in a period of dispersed matter under the influence of gravitation we could trace the condensation of the matter into smaller volume, but when the elements came near enough together to allow of chemical action, we should then have a change that could not be referred to the antecedent conditions of things, but which would be a manifestation of a hitherto unmanifested property of the elements, namely chemical affinity. Kinematic deduction here would find a break of continuity due to the manifestation of a new force. Again, we might conceive a world of diffused oxygen and hydrogen, and this world and its phenomena could be traced a certain way by our knowledge of the laws of gases; but

if a spark should pass through such a world, there would be a new manifestation of which the original state of things would give no hint. The elements would combine into the water-molecule and appear as water-vapor, and this again would suffer another break of continuity when it was condensed into water, and this in turn would once more transgress the law of continuity when it became solid as ice. Thus we see that in the actual physical world of experience we have repeated breaks of continuity due to the fact that the power world is continually manifesting itself in new departures. The phenomenal world, that is the observable world in space and time, is perpetually subject to irruptions from the power world. Ordinarily, we seek to reinstate the endangered continuity by gathering up these various forces into the notion of "the nature of things," without observing that of this "nature" we have absolutely no experience, and that it is simply an invisible and hypothetical metaphysical support for the series of changes in experience.

And here it must be pointed out that while it is perfectly clear that there is causality in the case, the nature and location of that causality are by no means plain. We might possibly seek to locate it in the form of central forces in the invisible metaphysical elements, or we might locate it in one all-embracing energy from which the course of nature forever proceeds, or by which that course is forever administered. We have here a metaphysical question of no small difficulty and one which cannot be settled by any observation or by off-hand thinking of any sort. Professor Tyndall in the passages quoted expressed the conviction that there is necessity in the case, and claims that we know we are dealing with necessary forces. To this the answer must be that no one knows anything of the kind. The forces, whatever they may be, are not open to observation, and their nature must be found by critical reflection. There is indeed an order in experience which, so far as we are concerned, is fixed, and which on that account we may call necessary, but of the necessity or non-necessity of the causality at work we know directly nothing. All that we discern in such cases is a certain uniformity in change upon which we can rely in experience, but of how the uniformity is produced no one has the slightest knowledge by inductive ob-

servation. This notion of necessity is one of the most specious and baseless of all the illusions that have misled speculative thought. There is a general assumption that the alternative is chaos or at least arbitrariness and caprice, whereas the fact might well be uniformity administered by free intelligence.

In one of the passages quoted from Professor Tyndall there is the suggestion, of continual recurrence in the literature of this debate, that the existence of these natural laws excludes the conception of any special volition entering into the order of nature. And to this the answer is, there is nothing whatever in the conception of volition which forbids that it should be rational and consistent. It is entirely conceivable that a supreme intelligence should administer the order of the world in uniform fashion for the securing of its own ends; and indeed, when we think the matter out, it appears that free intelligence is the only real basis of uniformity we can find. Necessity becomes such a basis only by assuming that it must be uniform, in which case all possibility of change would be excluded. As to the difficulty involved in the notion of special volition, that is merely a confusion arising from not understanding the relation between the universal and the particulars subsumed under it. Both volition and law in general are nothing in the concrete, and in order to effect anything whatever in the concrete world each must be specialized into particular form in application. A volition that was not a special volition of some particular thing would be an empty abstraction.

So, then, the space and time world remains open to observation. We may study its coexistences and sequences and find certain uniformities on which we can practically rely. This can be known apart from any metaphysics whatever, but when it comes to deciding the nature of the back-lying forces, we have a speculative problem which must be handed over to philosophy for solution. Moreover the experienced order, from which all our real knowledge must proceed, is by no means the hard-and-fast thing closed against all modification that the abstract theorist assumes it to be. Experience gives abundant illustration of the compatibility of law and purpose in the physical world. When we consider the relation of man to the system of general laws, we find that he

can use it for the production of a great variety of effects which the laws left to themselves would never produce. General laws, like those of gravitation or heat or electricity, would never weave a yard of cotton or make a steam-engine or drive a trolley-car. These laws and forces are continually receiving specific direction and application from human volition, which is ever playing into the physical system and producing a multitude of effects which could not be traced to antecedent physical conditions but only to human thought and purpose. A series of beings, for instance, speculative and scientific microbes, ignorant of human personality, and unable to find it among their objects, might study the order of physical nature on the supposition that physical antecedents determine all physical consequents, conclude that human personality is an altogether impossible notion, and reject as unscientific the thought that human purpose counts for anything in the on-going of the world. They might even wax eloquent and peremptory over "scientific method," the "continuity of natural law," and the general havoc that would be wrought in microbic science by such an admission, and their talk would not be unlike that of some human speculators. But, in spite of these rhetorical shudders and alarms, the error of their "postulates" is manifest. In fact, if there were any positive reason for thinking that a multitude of wills, supernal and infernal, are playing into our system, science could say nothing against it. And if such control of nature is possible to man, in spite of general laws, there seems to be no good reason why it should be impossible with God. Indeed Professor Tyndall in his paper explaining his famous prayer-test proposition admitted that as man can work through the system and produce multitudinous effects without breaking any general laws, it is possible that God also should do the same. But he did not always bear this in mind. When he was arguing with Canon Mozley, he was sure that physical effects must always be traced to physical antecedents only.

On account of this fact that man is continually modifying the system so as to produce faults in any purely physical deduction, Dr. Bushnell in his work, *Nature and the Supernatural*, characterized all human action as miraculous, so far as the physical system is concerned. It is something that cannot be deduced

from that system and can only be looked upon as a modification from without. The general order of law is indeed maintained, but the loom weaves a different pattern as the threads are manipulated by the unseen human spirit. There seems, then, not to be the slightest reason for doubting that God may produce a great many effects, not against general laws, but through them or in accordance with them; and those effects would be quite as specially created and specially willed as though they had been dropped out of the skies by fiat. They would be no more specifically designed or specifically created in the latter case than in the former. If it be said that in this case there would nevertheless be a point where the antecedents have a different consequent because of this supernatural determination, the answer would be that the same fact must be found in all human control of the system. Our human activity in what we call nature is of course chiefly directive. We do not produce the forces of the system, but we do direct them and determine their effects. In this way we control nature. But in order to accomplish this there must be a point, say in the nervous system, where some motion is initiated that is not the outcome of antecedent states of the nervous system, but due to the interaction of the invisible mind with the organism. To be sure, some persons of rigor and vigor have thought this would never do, and have preferred to hold that consciousness itself has nothing to do with the control of our bodies and with the various other physical changes thence resulting. But this reduces the theory to absurdity, implying, as it does, that the whole series of physical movements whereby the human mind has manifested itself in its historic and social life has gone on without any origin in, or control by, thought.

The physicists have been inclined to content themselves with eliminating miracle from the physical realm, leaving it undecided whether it might not be allowed in the mental realm. Physical miracle, we think, is unconditionally to be rejected, but psychological miracle may perhaps be admitted. Such a view aids the imagination a little. A psychological miracle involves no such seeming waste of energy as rolling the St. Lawrence up the Falls of Niagara, and therefore is not so great a shock to our ideas of law. It is curious how the size of a miracle comes into our thought

of the subject. Not infrequently it has been suggested that certain miracles, say the stopping of the earth in its rotation upon its axis, are impossible, because then the seas would rush over the land and drown out the continents, the idea apparently being that if God wrought a miracle of such size, he would not be equal to looking after all the details and might possibly wreck the physical system if he meddled. But the thorough-going, thick-and-thin rejecter of miracles will not allow any such half-way work as the admission of psychological miracle involves. He extends the realm of law into mind and society also, and insists on continuity until everything, physical and mental alike, is bound up in a rigid scheme of necessity, so that consequents succeed their antecedents everywhere with invariable uniformity. But here, too, we meet the same fact already mentioned. The reign of law may be universal, but it is subordinate. In some sense the laws of mind are continuous and we could not dispense with them, but in themselves they secure nothing. As we said of physical laws, they apply to all events in their realm, but they do not imply them. The law of gravitation runs a water wheel, but does not make it. The laws of physical nature are omnipresent in the human control of nature, but that control secures results which the laws of themselves would never reach. Similarly, the laws of mind are in some sense inviolable. They must be regarded in education, in society, in governmental action, and even in self-control, but in themselves they do not imply the results we reach through them. Here, also, we find, as in the outer world, an order of law at the service of intelligence, an order through which we work our will. We may, then, maintain at once the inviolability of law and its subordinate character, so that freedom may manifest itself through the law and not against it, yet in such a way that the results shall be as distinctly an outcome of purpose as they would be if produced by fiat. If we reject this general conception in favor of a universal determinism, then we have no longer a scientific doctrine based on experience and induction, but a dogmatic speculation which is the outcome of superficial reflection, and which overturns reason itself.

In some sense, then, we are in the midst of miracles all the time. As having a supernatural root, all things are miracles. Birth and

life and death, the springing of the grass, the growing of the flowers, the ripening of the harvest, the march of the seasons, and the shining of the stars, all are miracles in the sense that they alike root in the ever-living, ever-working will of God. They are also miracles in the sense that they cannot be deduced in their successive phases from antecedent conditions, but continually proceed from the activity of the Divine. They can be as little deduced from antecedents as the successive phases in a musical composition can be deduced from the antecedent ones, but they all continually depend upon a causality which is not in the series, but which produces and maintains it in due order and sequence. At the same time these things are natural in the sense that an order may be discerned in them on which we can practically depend. But this order is not to be extended into a dogmatic finality. These laws must always be restricted, as Mr. Mill has said, to a "reasonable degree of extension to adjacent cases." We must remember what a scanty insight we have into so-called natural laws and how limited is our scope at best. All that we really experience is a certain uniformity within narrow spatial and temporal limits,—that is, narrow in relation to the infinitude of possible existence. We cannot found these uniformities upon any necessity of reason, neither can we establish them as all-embracing even in space and time. We cannot say with any security that they constitute anything more than a limited order on which we can practically depend in the sphere of our present experience, and even here we discover a great deal that we are unable to reduce to order. There is very much that resembles weather in our cosmic experience. The weather may indeed be subject to law, but nevertheless its laws are so imperfectly known to us that we regard it as one of the symbols of inconstancy. Now when we take long stretches of time and great ranges of space, for all we know, the whole order of nature, so-called, might be a species of cosmic weather with little uniformities here and there, and now and then, but never to be extended so as to become all-embracing necessities. If we should have a series of students of nature among very short-lived beings, some might report that it was always winter and some that it was always summer. Others might report that it is always day and still



others that it is always night. They could easily find these little uniformities in their experience, but if they extended them to take in all the possibilities of the world, they would certainly be very much mistaken.

Considered, then, as a speculative proposition, the difficulty is less to establish the possibility of miracle than to prove the necessary uniformity and universality of law. It is an altogether possible proposition that experience does not admit of being reduced to an all-embracing uniformity, or that uniformity and non-uniformity divide the field of experience between them. It is an equally possible proposition that the uniformities in our experience are relative to ourselves and even transitory in their validity. But these high considerations belong to the deeper problems of knowledge. We descend then from these heights and are met by the question, Is it not the clearest dictate of science that we are never to look for supernatural causes until we have exhausted the natural ones? Is not science itself compelled to exclude all miracle and all supernaturalism? Some truth, but more confusion, appears in these questions. The realm of science as a study of the uniformities of experience is confounded with the question of causality, which belongs to philosophy. Certainly science is not compelled to eliminate miracle in the sense of a cause outside the phenomenal series, any more than it is compelled to exclude man from all control of the physical series. Science is compelled to exclude miracle in the same sense that our hypothetical physicists among the microbes would be compelled to exclude man from the causal factors of the universe. The space and time order we have seen to be subject to continual irruptions from the invisible world of power. In this space and time order we admit no supernatural causes for the reason that we admit no causes of any sort. All we aim to do in this field is to arrange the events in groups and rows according to their observed spatial and temporal relations, and for this we need no assistance from metaphysics in any form, natural or supernatural. Science, as thus understood, is entirely neutral to the question of freedom or necessity, natural or supernatural. The continuity of law can be maintained along with complete openness to purpose. But when we affirm natural causes in any other sense than

that of observed phenomenal antecedents, we are really talking obsolete metaphysics, not science. Certainly we must look only for natural causes in the phenomenal world, but such causes are not causes at all; only uniformities of phenomenal relation. Science, then, never tells us what is possible or not possible in reality, but only how things hang together in experience. Whenever it assumes to do more than this it is no longer science, but dogmatism. As to what science can recognize or not recognize, or what scientific method requires, it is plain that any conception of science that does not permit it to recognize any fact whatever ignores the very first aim of all thinking, namely, to know the facts. The microbes in that gas or water world could have dogmatized with equal profundity and justice about the possible and the impossible.

So much for general laws themselves, supposing them to exist. For us of course they do exist as orders of being and happening to which we must adjust ourselves. In so far they constitute a datum for us. They are not indeed much of a limitation even for us, as we are able to use them, and we should not be able to do without them. But God himself as the absolute source of all finite being is bound by nothing but his own wisdom and goodness. What they dictate, that he does. If they call for uniformity, there is uniformity. If they call for change, there is change. God never acts against nature because for him there is no nature to act against. His purpose, founded in his wisdom and goodness, is alone law-giving for his action, and all else, whatever it may be, is but the expression of that purpose. Nature conceived as a barrier to God, or as anything with which God must reckon, is a pure fiction, a product of unclear thought which has lost itself in dogmatic abstractions. From the standpoint of the Divine, then, there are no "interventions," "interruptions," "interferences," and that sort of thing. There is simply the continual working of the Divine Will to realize the divine purpose.

We may sum up the results thus far reached in the affirmation of the universality of law, and also its subordination. There is, indeed, considerable faith in admitting such universality, but still the general tendency of thought is to this affirmation. At the same time, as we have seen, the system of law as anything ex-

perienced is entirely compatible with the equal universality of purpose so that law serves as the form under which purpose realizes itself; and when we come to the question of causality, we have to affirm a universal supernaturalism, not indeed a disorderly, capricious, and chaotic supernaturalism, but one which proceeds by orderly methods and in consistent ways. The attempt to construe the world of power in mechanical terms critical reflection clearly shows to be impossible. It commits us to barren tautologies and endless regresses, and when made universally brings reason itself to hopeless bankruptcy. We have now to inquire how this universal supernaturalism bears on the question of miracle.

It is plain that this conception of the immanence of God in all cosmic on-going deprives the question of miracle as a departure from the natural order of very much of its importance. As we have before said, the great interest of religion in miracle has been due to the current deistic philosophy, according to which miracles seem to be the only way of finding God and the only way in which God could manifest his living presence. This interest in miracle is set aside by our insight into the fact of the supernatural character of the causality of the world, for now, instead of finding God with difficulty anywhere, we are permitted to find him everywhere. All of those arguments against miracle based upon anti-religious grudges are also set aside by the insight into this universal supernaturalism. There is no longer any division of labor between nature and God, as if nature did the bulk of the work of the world and God came in to do the rest when nature proved inadequate. There is rather, and only, an orderly working of the divine in all things, miraculous and non-miraculous alike, and the only place which could be found for miracle in this view would be, as already said, as a sign to call the attention of men who were immersed in sense to a divine presence and meaning which it is important they should discern and which they would otherwise miss.

In the traditional discussion of this subject the miraculous and the supernatural have not been distinguished but have been treated as identical. They must, however, be distinguished. The result of our study thus far is to affirm a universal supernatural, but we have not touched the question of technical miracle,

in the sense of a manifest departure from experienced law. This question we have now to consider.

From the standpoint of theism the order of law first becomes a rational thing and furnishes ground for rational expectation. For the theist, too, there is a decided presumption against miracles, at least of the striking sort, and the presumption arises from the nature of intelligence itself. But this debate can lead to no result when abstractly taken, for then it becomes a shuffling of abstract notions which make no connection with real life. Thus Hume's argument against miracles was little more than an academic puzzle or riddle, and he recanted it by his own admissions. After opposing uniform experience to testimony and concluding that the balance must always be in favor of experience, he limits the statement by saying "that a miracle can never be proved so as to be a foundation of a system of religion, for I own that otherwise there may possibly be miracles or violations of the usual course of nature of such a kind as to admit a proof from testimony." On the other hand believers have held that testimony could prove anything. One has only to pile up the testimony long enough to have it overcome all opposition. But this, too, is academic. Abstract and unrelated wonders might conceivably be proved by abstract testimony, but such suggestions have no concrete value. If these wonders happened or did not happen we should be equally indifferent, and however much evidence might be offered for them, they would inevitably fade out of rational belief until at last no one would take the pains even to deny them. In a rational system miracles without moral meaning and religious bearing would have as little credibility as the stories of Jack the Giant Killer and Aladdin's lamp. We should not believe them, we should not even disbelieve them, we should ignore them. For the theist the presumption against any showy thaumaturgy is so strong that he rejects it at once. Some adequate reason for miracle must be shown to secure it any consideration. And in deciding what is an adequate reason the personal equation will turn the scale. If we are irreligious in our disposition, and think that the supreme and only sacred thing, of course there will be no faith in miracle. But if, on the other hand, we believe that God's deepest purpose in our life is a moral

and spiritual one, and also believe that we are continually in the hands of God who is seeking to build us into his spiritual children, we shall not be hostile to any conception of miracle that fits into this view. The miracles that may have been necessary in the earlier times of ignorance to introduce a new order of thought and life will not necessarily disturb us; and all those facts of prayer and spiritual communion which point to the continual rooting of the inner life in God will be accepted as a matter of course. These, however, will never admit of anything approaching demonstration. The miracles of Biblical history are at best too far away to make any strong impression on us today, apart from their connection with the Christian system in which we already believe. And the touch of God in the inner life will always be more of a secret to the believing soul than a thing that could be put into a psychological court and cross-examined. Here, as said, the personal equation and the general impression made by the religious history of our race will decide our historical faith or unfaith, while for the inner life of the individual only the soul's own experience can be final. Our general world-view, our sense of fundamental and eternal values, our own most sacred and secret life, are determinate here. It is more than idle to refer these questions to a committee of chemists or other worthy people to decide.

It is altogether credible that in the early stages of human development, when both knowledge and religion were very crude, God found his way more directly through signs and wonders to the human mind than is necessary today. That which was needed was to guide men on the upward road, not to satisfy a committee of Sadducees. Such condescension to human weakness would not have been unworthy of God. Indeed from a pedagogical standpoint it is not easy to see how humanity could well have been started in any other way. In our own times God's pedagogical methods have changed. We are able to see God in his works, and our intellect has been developed so that we no longer need the kindergarten methods of the early years of our race. For us there is no objection to finding God in prodigies, if there be such things nowadays, but it is far more important to find him in the normal life of man and the unfoldings of history. Prodigies are vanishing quantities in any case, compared with

the historic life and development of humanity. Here alone does the divine presence have abiding and universal significance. It is religious illiteracy to seek God only or mainly anywhere else. That is to overlook the moral and religious aim of the whole human movement, and to degrade God to a mere thaumaturgist or sleight-of-hand performer. Physical miracles in any case are instrumental only and have their use in what they help us to. But the end of it all is the knowledge of God and spiritual likeness to him. The slow moralization of life and society, the enlightenment of conscience and its growing empire, the deepening sense of responsibility for the good order of the world and the well-being of men, the gradual putting away of old wrongs and foul diseases and blinding superstitions, these are the great proofs of God in history and life; in comparison with these all physical miracles sink into insignificance, and except as related to these higher interests have no value whatever. For us, then, the physical miracle is becoming less and less important and the spiritual miracle of the redeemed and transformed life, redeemed and transformed society, the spread of reason and righteousness in the earth, are the perennial miracles always possible and ever to be insisted upon.

For the sake, however, of those who may be disturbed over alleged physical miracle, say that of the resurrection of Jesus, I quote a passage from my work *The Immanence of God* which may be worthy of consideration by both parties:

When we ask what is real and what unreal in objective knowledge we commonly fall back on sense perception as the sole mark of reality. That is real which is there for the sense of all, and all else is illusion. For the routine life of everyday fact this test is all-sufficient, but it becomes very doubtful when made absolute and universal. There is not the slightest speculative warrant for saying that the range of perception must be the same in all. If there were persons otherwise sane and normal who professed an awareness of things beyond the common sense-range we should have no good reason for questioning the fact. There might be visions and voices for the spirit and in the spirit beyond all common seeing and hearing, and they might carry with them the same conviction of independent reality that we have in our common sense life. Or, since voice and vision are too suggestive of sense organs, let us say that there might be a spiritual awareness of reality beyond sense, which would

be a revelation that could never be judged or tested by sense. The conditions of such perception might also be a certain preparedness of spirit, as the sea can reflect the heavens above it only when its waters are at peace. But the gist and test of all perception is the conviction of reality that accompanies it. This can never be deduced from anything else or referred to anything else, and if there were such awareness of things beyond sense, it could be described only in sense terms and would thus be liable to misunderstanding. We should try to judge it by sense when it might transcend sense altogether. Reflections of this sort might lead both the believer and the unbeliever to see that the sense test is not certainly final.

We might apply these considerations to the miracle of the resurrection, a miracle without which not much of the Christian faith would be left, and one having which we can dispense with most of the rest. The thing that was essential was that the disciples should be convinced that their Lord still lived and that in his glorified existence he was still their Master and the head of his Kingdom. This was secured by what we call his resurrection and ascension, and it is really indifferent whether these constituted a fact which the Sadducees could have perceived, had they been in the neighborhood, or not. The important thing is that the minds of the disciples were so impressed with the fact that it became the corner-stone of their faith and of the Christian Church. How this was done does not matter much, provided it was done, and the miracle was equally great in any case.

Thus we have seen how complicated the question of miracle really is, and what deep root it has in our philosophy and our religious conceptions of the meaning of life and the world. It is infantile to suppose that science can prove or disprove this faith. If the Christian life be strong within us, and if the devils of greed and pride and selfishness are now being cast out, we shall not be very seriously disturbed by the stories of ancient miracle. And on the other hand if these spiritual miracles are not being wrought today, it will matter very little what happened two thousand years ago.

In the past this debate was carried on chiefly between religion and irreligion, but now it is going on to some extent among believers themselves. For them a double warning seems to be

in place. On the one hand, we must bear in mind the distinction between the supernatural and the miraculous. The former can be maintained against all adversaries, and this is the thing of chief importance. Signs and wonders, as we have said, are only means to an end in any case, and their function today is practically ended. We have come into a better stage of religious development, where we no longer need them, and where they may easily be a hindrance to faith rather than an aid. One can but sympathize, therefore, with those who wish to emphasize the fact of law in all life, as the condition of mental and spiritual soundness and sanity. They insist that all religious growth must depend on using the means that God has placed in our power instead of hoping that the laws of mental and spiritual life may be set aside. This fact cannot be too strongly urged, but it must be done with wisdom. When we reject miracle, we must make it clear that we do not mean to reject God and the supernatural, but only the thaumaturgic. We should look well to the scope of our language and the drift of our logic. There is much of the old rationalistic dogmatism masquerading as science and pursuing its old trade of undermining the higher faiths of humanity, and we must be careful not to aid it by using its specious but treacherous phrases. It is well to remember that nothing is gained for religion by minimizing its supernatural claims. The just claims of science can be fully recognized without infringing on the equally just claims of faith. We should also deal with the subject from the Christian point of view and the central Christian conceptions. Matters of detail decide nothing, whether for attack or defence. One who holds the central, the supreme, the stupendous miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God could hardly fail to see that the resurrection and ascension are an integral part of it, and he will not much concern himself about the withered fig-tree or the fish with the coin in its mouth. As for the Sadducees, I have spent much time with them and doubt if they can be convinced, and I am not even sure that they wish to be convinced. The Gospel was not made for Sadducees and professional doubters, but for men and women as they have been and are, weary and heavy-laden and in great need of finding God, and quite unable to find him in ways that would satisfy the critic. Something had



to be done for these people, and really that something has proved more effective than any of the improvements that have been offered. But both these terms, miracle and supernatural, have become so infected with unpleasant associations that we should do better to drop them altogether, and talk rather about God and set about doing his will in the full faith that our times are in his hands and that he is working in us and for us to will and to do of his good pleasure. We are not in a machine world, but in God's world, in a world of persons with God, the supreme person, at the head. And in such a world it is permitted to see visions and dream dreams, and to keep the soul open to the heavenly vision. To some Sadducees this will always be a stumbling-block, to others foolishness, and life must answer them. Perhaps it may still be true that some things are revealed to babes which are hidden from the wise and prudent. But if the Sadducee will continue this discussion, he should learn that philosophy has progressed since his traditional arguments were fashioned, so that they are now largely obsolete. He must carry the matter deeper and treat it more systematically, if he would reach any results worthy of consideration. It might also be well for him to master the difference between science, as the fruitful study of the order of experience, to which we owe so much, and "Science," that product of crude dogmatism and great question-begging term of the half-educated and hearsay thinker.